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THE NATIVITY
DOSSO DOSSI (1479-1542)
GIFT OF MR. AND MRS. E. RAYMOND FIELD

THREE FERRARESE PAINTINGS

The court of Ferrara, presided over by the house of Este, was among the most artistically inclined of the Italian Renaissance. As early as the second half of the fifteenth century, under the rule of Borso (1413-71) and Ercole I (1471-1505), the strife-loving dukes who were at the same time devoted to the arts, there took place an unanticipated flowering of building and painting, so that the triumvirate of the Ferrarese painters of this time, Cosmé Tura, Francesco Cossa and Ercole Roberti, may well be compared with the great contemporary Florentine and Venetian Quattrocento painters.

If the last years of the reign of Ercole be designated as the "golden age of Ferrara," the rule of the great Alfonso (1505-34), the husband of Lucretia Borgia and the friend of Titian, and that of his follower, Ercole II (1534-59), only completes the concord of the arts, for now to the formative arts is added the splendid art of poetry. No other court of Italy could boast of such poets as Guarini and Boiardo, or, greatest of them all, the creator of the *Orlando Furioso*, Ariosto, and the poet of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Torquato Tasso. Even more than the architects of the villas of Alfonso, more than such great contemporary painters as Dosso and Garofalo, they have spread throughout the world the fame of the court of Ferrara as patron of the arts.

Contributing also to this renown was the spiritual influence of those members of the princely house who made a name for themselves outside of Ferrara through their furthering of the arts, above all the two most cultivated noblewomen of the Renaissance, Beatrice and Isabella d'Este, one the bride of Ludovico Moro, the Duke of Milan, who had her portrait painted by Leonardo da Vinci, and who was to meet with such an early death; the other who as the

bride of Francesco Sforza, the Duke of Mantua, came into close relationship with such great artists as Mantegna, Giovanni Bellini and Raphael. It was Alfonso's brother, Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, who was the owner of that enchanting Villa d'Este in Tivoli which today more than any other building carries the name of Este to all the world.

Titian's protracted connexion with the Court of Ferrara, where he painted for Alfonso some of his most famous works, such as *The Tribute Money* in Dresden and the *Bacchus and Ariadne* in the London National Gallery, would alone suffice to cede to Alfonso a leading place in the history of great art patrons.

But if in their own day the painters at his court did not attain the fame of Ariosto and Tasso, they now have the advantage of being more accessible and understandable to the lover of the arts: for how many who admire the works of Dosso Dossi in the galleries read the



REST ON THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT
DOSSO DOSSI (1479-1542)
PITTI PALACE, FLORENCE



THE HOLY FAMILY
BENVENUTO GAROFALO (1481-1559)
GIFT OF THE FOUNDERS SOCIETY

poems of Tasso or Ariosto, and could they, even if they would, enjoy them directly—that is in their original language—as they can the paintings of this period?

If any of the Ferrarese deserves an exhaustive acquaintance with his art, it is Dosso, the imaginative, romantic painter of glowing color and iridescent light. Not without reason did Ariosto praise his paintings together with those of the greatest masters of the Renaissance,—he names nine in familiar verses,—or Alfonso allow his study to be adorned with his works side by side with the most splendid creations of Titian. No other artist conjures up for us as does he in his representation of Circe (Villa Borghese and the Benson Collection) the magic of the romanticism of the *Orlando Furioso*; and his fantastic figures of knights and saints in poetical, magically illuminated landscapes have a charm which makes them hold their own beside

the dreamy figures of Giorgione and the worldly heroes of Titian.

But he also assumes a significant position in the development of modern painting. In the history of *chiaroscuro*, which takes its way from Leonardo and Giorgione to Correggio, Tintoretto, Caravaggio and further on to Rembrandt, he stands about in the middle, between Giorgione and Correggio, influenced by the one, himself inspiring the other.

The charming small Madonna picture, which has come to the Museum as the gift of Mr. and Mrs. E. Raymond Field, is a characteristic work of his richly inventive art. It is at the same time the creation of a court painter; for this Madonna has nothing of the biblical poverty about her, but wears splendid garments—the bright blue and yellow bordered mantle is lined with green—and a head covering in the form of a costly Oriental turban. The Child in the cradle is so placed between herself

and Joseph that it is the first to be visible to the devout onlooker; she holds the white shawl with its golden fringe in such a way that the head of the Child stands out clearly against it, and the entire scene is given a hieratic character. The surroundings, too, scarcely suggest the poverty of the scene which the Bible describes and to which the northern painters of this period adhered. The wooden framework of the stable is almost lost sight of in the shadow, and leans against splendid, brightly lighted antique columns; and the group is enframed by a marble balustrade, which is decorated with antique reliefs.

If the outer portrayal gives us a church-court-like conception of the Christian story, the artist was especially gifted in working out its mystical inner content in the sense of the legend. The group of the Holy Family stands out magically illumined against the shadowy background, out of which gleam the emerald-colored tones of the foliage; the varicolored costumes—the orange and red-brown of Joseph's dress and the pale red and bright blue of Mary's, seeming, as it were, to melt into light. And this light, coming from some uncertain source, seems to spread out around the Christchild and upon the white linen in the midst of which he—quite apart—is resting. Fairylike, in shades of rose, an idyllic landscape spreads out in the background, with castles between delicately foliated trees.

This little picture of Dosso Dossi must have been created at about the same time as *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt* in the Pitti Palace in Florence (see illustration) and the Madonna in Worcester,—well into the second decade of the sixteenth century. It differs essentially from the less picturesque, more correctly drawn, but less imaginative style of his brother, Battista Dossi, to whom it was at one time wrongly attributed. A comparison with

the picture in the Pitti, which has the same type of figures with short limbs and similar haloes, and the same draperies with their swinging folds, suffices to recognize the same painter here. In the not much later masterpiece of *Circe* in the Villa Borghese and in the *Dido* (Galerie Doria), we can observe the pasty, almost Rembrandtesque, rendering of materials, especially of the gold borders, that we see in our picture.

While Dosso's composition is built up entirely of light and color contrasts, Garofalo's masterly little creation—a gift of the Founders Society—is artistically constructed in the architectural Roman sense, so that the two sides of the composition exactly counterbalance each other. On one side the Madonna, from whom the lines lead up to St. Anne; on the other Joseph and the Christchild, behind whom the lines of the landscape, with its rocky forms, ascend in a like abrupt manner. Both landscape and architecture are severely articulated and the individual figures are alike plastically formed and arranged, so that the popular name for Garofalo as the "Raphael of Ferrara" can be easily understood. His work has not, to be sure, the mysterious charm of Dosso's, but nevertheless, in the immaculate, enamel-like technic and the broad, glowing color, he shows here the best side of his art, which is usually somewhat lacking in spirit. Ferraresque is the orange in Joseph's dress, and the clear, bright green of the landscape colors—which we meet also with Dosso; the shining blue of Mary's mantle, however, with the pale lilac of the lining, and the elegant shades of the costume of Saint Anne, are his own.

We know the development of style and the life story of the artist quite in detail, for Vasari knew the master personally and gives us a lengthy account of him. His enormous activity was arrested by blindness during the last nine years of his life, first in one, then in



NOLI ME TANGERE
ORTOLANO (ACTIVE 1512-25)

both eyes. Our little picture was probably painted at about the same time as that of Dosso's, in the twenties of the sixteenth century.

The third Ferrarese to be represented in our galleries is Ortolano (Giovanni Battista Benvenuti), an artist about whose existence so little is known that for a long time his works were taken to be early works by Garofalo. How different he is, especially in his color, our panel, which represents the *Noli me tangere* with St. John the Evangelist, shows. In the depth of his

color (the blue of Christ's robe has an especially wonderful deep ring) he comes nearer to Dosso, while the types on the other hand remind us somewhat of Garofalo's, and—especially that of John—those of the older Lorenzo Costa, who was probably Ortolano's teacher. What is peculiar to him is an inward religious feeling which is like neither Dosso's nor Garofalo's and which expresses itself in all three figures in our composition, especially in the finely felt Correggesque Christ. But the original note in the composition is the presence

of John the Evangelist, who in lines and colors (deep red garment) forms a counterbalance to the principal group, and in the true Ferraresque building up of the landscape, in which the castles—also a sign of the court-like character of this art—are never lacking in the midst of a religious representation.

The acquisition of these three Ferrarese pictures, by the three most significant painters of this hitherto not

represented school of the time of Alfonso I, is all the more significant as—thanks to the good representation of Venetian paintings of the High Renaissance in our galleries and those of the master of Parma, Correggio, two of whose masterpieces we possess—we can now form an excellent idea of the middle position which the Ferrara school takes between these two poles.

W. R. VALENTINER.

TWO PIECES OF AMERICAN SILVER

If, as has often been claimed, American silver is the most significant art contribution of Colonial days in this country, the Institute is particularly fortunate in acquiring two examples of pre-Revolutionary work, one a tankard by Edward Winslow (1669-1753), the other a porringer by John Burt (1691-1745). These pieces were bought at the Francis P. Garvan sale recently held in New York, from the income of the Gibbs-Williams bequest and are the first purchases of silver made by the Institute.

Both Winslow and Burt pursued their calling in Boston, where the bulk of early American silver was produced and where it is possible to trace its evolution in one single locality. Even as early as the middle of the seventeenth century we find Massachusetts silversmiths actively at work; in other words, less than a quarter of a century after the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. This rapid rise is easily explained by the character of the early settlements. Among their founders were men of wealth, culture and enterprise, who had left England on account of religious persecution and who were prepared to settle permanently in the new country. Here they found large resources of grain, fish and lumber, which could be converted into coin as the result of trading with the West Indies, England and

southern Europe. This coin, in turn—English, Spanish, Dutch, French—was the actual substance from which the early silverware was made. As trading increased, industries developed, providing employment not only for those engaged in the manufacture of necessary articles, but luxuries as well. In this last category was the silversmith, who counted among his customers prosperous blacksmiths and coopers as well as rich merchants.

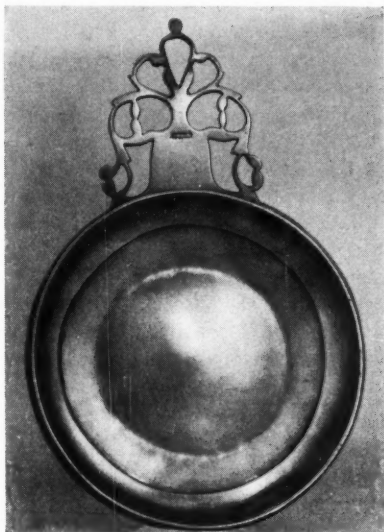


SILVER TANKARD
EDWARD WINSLOW
BOSTON (1669-1753)

The model of New England silver was at all times English. Even when Dutch influences crept in, they came not directly from Holland, as was the case in New York, but by way of England, where they had first been assimilated. The English silver brought to America by the early colonists was naturally looked upon as the epitome of correct style and English makers continued to set the style for American silver throughout the eighteenth century. Instead of slavishly copying, however, American silversmiths rather adapted English styles, giving to them an individuality of their own, recreating out of known forms something typical of the simplicity and honesty of the early settlers.

Edward Winslow, undoubtedly one of the greatest of the Boston makers, was the grandson of John Winslow, who came to America in the *Fortune* in 1621, and was the great grandson of Mistress Anne Hutchinson, whose disturbing theological discussions caused the Puritan fathers so much discomfort. Not only was Edward Winslow a prolific worker in silver, but he was an extremely important figure in the community, holding at different times such offices as constable, tithing man, surveyor, colonel of the Boston regiment, overseer of the poor, sheriff of Suffolk county, judge of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas. John Burt, too, was a man of prominence—tithing man, constable and clerk of the market. Nor were these two men exceptions: the majority of early silversmiths were men in whom the community placed great trust.

The Winslow tankard acquired by the Institute may be dated about 1725-35. Exact dating of American silver, unless written records are available, is an impossibility. In England, thanks to a regulation requiring each maker to add a date-letter to his other hall marks, it is possible to assign an exact date to any given piece of plate. In the Colonies no such system was in vogue and as a result the dating of an article is de-



SILVER PORRINGER
JOHN BURT
BOSTON (1691-1745)

pendent on a study of forms and decoration and a knowledge of the working period of the maker.

The first New England tankards are modelled directly after English ones of the early Charles II period. The body is low and plain, the lid flat and fitted with an ornamental thumb-piece for convenient lifting, the handle is inclined to be heavy. Toward the end of the century forms tend to change and by the second quarter of the eighteenth century several new characteristics have developed. The body is now appreciably higher and more slender, the lid is domed and frequently topped with a finial. The base mouldings are more elaborate and an ovolo moulding, called a mid-band, is applied to the body of the tankard. The proportions of the handle are somewhat reduced and the earlier type of double-cupped thumb-piece is replaced by more sophisticated designs. From the foregoing it is evident that the tankard acquired by the Institute is unquestionably of eighteenth century make and probably produced during the second quarter.

Whereas the purpose of the tankard, a vessel for drinking beer and ale, has never been questioned, there is a wide divergence of opinion regarding the use of the early porringer. In England it seems to have been generally associated with the barber-surgeons and their practice of cupping and bleeding. Whether it was ever used for domestic purposes is not known. In any event it was not a common article. By the time the porringer reached America, in the second half of the seventeenth century, it had become entirely domesticated. Some writers claim that it was used for heating brandy and other liquors. Others insist that it was exclusively a child's dish for food of a soft nature. One author contends that by the beginning

of the eighteenth century it was used as a sugar bowl. But the consensus of opinion is that it served as a household dish for porridge, bread and milk, broth, berries and cream and other food.

The John Burt porringer acquired by the Institute is typical of all New England pieces, in that it has a convex-sided bowl, with a concave base and a slightly flaring rim. As was customary, the handle is pierced, thus keeping the heat of the contents of the bowl from being conducted to the hand. In this example the piercing is in the "keyhole" pattern, a design that was to rule in popularity throughout the eighteenth century, during the second quarter of which the Burt porringer presumably was made.

ROBERT H. TANNAHILL.

AN AMERICAN TABLE AND CHAIR

In addition to the silver described above, two pieces of furniture have recently been added to the rapidly growing collection of early American decorative arts: a Philadelphia Chippendale style chair and a New England tea table.

The chair, which was purchased at the recent sale of the Francis P. Garvan collection, is the gift of Mr. Robert H. Tannahill, Honorary Curator of the department. It is an unusually fine exam-

ple of the Chippendale style of furniture for which the city of Philadelphia was famous and forms a splendid companion piece to the exquisite little Philadelphia lowboy presented by Mr. Tannahill a year ago. The openwork, beaker-form splat is in the Gothic taste and the slightly flaring side rails are mounted by a triple-arch crest rail embellished with touches of carving. But the most pleasing thing about the chair is its beauty of proportion, a characteristic which we have come to associate with the splendid group of Philadelphia cabinet makers which includes such well-known names as William Savery, Benjamin Randolph, Jonathan Gostlowe, and James Gillingham. By a comparison with already authenticated pieces, it seems to belong to the type that was made by the last named craftsman (compare Nos. 532 and 613, Reifsnnyder sale, and 621, 637, and 641, Girls Scout Exhibition), who was especially noted for his chairs. It has all the characteristics of the Philadelphia-made pieces which distinguish them from chairs made in



WALNUT TEA TABLE
NEW ENGLAND C. 1735-1750



CHIPPENDALE STYLE CHAIR
PHILADELPHIA c. 1760-1770
GIFT OF MR. ROBERT H. TANNAHILL

other sections of the Colonies: the carving, the mortising of the side rail through the back rail so that the tenon is visible (a method of construction never found on New England or on English chairs of this period), and the round, post-like legs (likewise found neither in Old or New England).

It might at first seem strange that the "Quaker City" should have produced the most elaborate furniture made in the

Colonies, but when we read of the gay and fashionable life of the "world's people" of the Philadelphia of that day, of the theatrical entertainments, the assembly dances, dinners, fox-hunting, punch drinking, horseracing and bull-baiting, it is not difficult to realize how well this rococo furniture must have fitted into such a milieu.

It is to be hoped that the Museum will be able to secure more pieces of Philadelphia-made furniture to add to this small nucleus, as the little house in which this part of the collections is installed—Whitby Hall—is a house which until recently stood in Philadelphia, on the corner of what is now Florence Avenue and Fifty-eighth Street, having been built there in 1754 by Colonel James Coultas, and it will be interesting to have at least one room completely furnished in Philadelphia-made furniture.

Of quite another character is the little cabriole-legged tea table of New England provenance, which was recently purchased from the income of the Gibbs-Williams bequest. In the restraint and simplicity of its lines and its lack of decorative motives, it has a distinctly Puritan feeling. Its most distinguished feature is the delicacy of the legs, with their rather unusual slipper feet, most of the tables of this type having the more common Dutch feet. It is in the Queen Anne style, of a type made in the Colonies as late as from 1735 to 1750.

JOSEPHINE WALTHER.

A CORRECTION

Sixteen Whistler lithographs recently acquired by the Print Department, were through an error described in the January Bulletin as an acquisition by purchase. They are the generous gift of Mr. and Mrs. Julius H. Haass.

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DIEGO RIVERA

The re-emergence of the Indian, which has taken place in Mexico with the revolution of Obregon, has been the force behind not only a new government in that country and a new social system, but a new art. The revolution has brought the land back into the hands of the peon, long submerged beneath the upper stratum of Spanish landholders; in the intellectual life of the nation a similar reversal has taken place. The life of the Indian today and the pre-conquest Indian civilization have taken the place, as subject matter and inspiration, which Spanish culture formerly held. The Mexican government is supporting extensive archeological work upon the remains of pre-Spanish Mexican life and a whole school of artists have appeared whose thought is based upon the Indian rather than the Spaniard in Mexico.

Diego Rivera, a leader in the now famous independent school of Mexican artists which has sprung up since the Revolution, is represented in the Detroit Institute of Arts by a number of drawings and watercolors and by a loan exhibit of drawing and paintings now being held. Rivera is a type of the intellectual side of the revolution in Mexico. He was born on December 8, 1886, in the silver-mining town of Guanajuato. His father was of Spanish parents, his

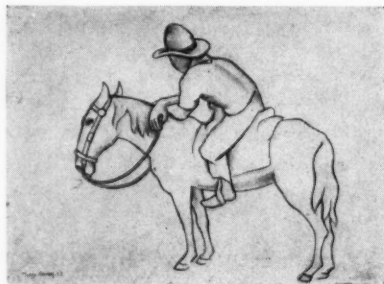


FIG. 1



FIG. 2

mother of an Indian father and a Spanish mother. As an art student in Mexico he was greatly stirred by the strong and monumental style of Aztec sculpture as well as by the Indian life he saw about him. He went to Europe to study, first at Madrid, then in Paris, with occasional excursions to England and to Italy. In between his years of study abroad was sandwiched a return to Mexico in 1910 long enough to see the Madero revolution. The influences upon him in his student days were two. One was that of a stirring in the national life so deep that it eventually woke even the patient, laboring Indian. The other was that of European painting, and especially of three great artists, Cézanne, Picasso, and finally Giotto.

The Still Life (dated 1918), a watercolor in our collection, shows how much he had learned of design and the value of simplicity from the disciplined, intellectual art of modern France. But Rivera was not willing to be limited by the narrow range of abstract painting.

A trip to Italy brought him the discovery of Giotto's frescoes, works at once monumental in form and full of deep human feeling. When he returned to Mexico in 1919 he was filled with a hope of doing frescoes, taking as his subject the rising of the peons and the struggle for a new Mexico.

The ministry of education in Obregon's government was at the same time interested in a campaign against the terrible illiteracy of the peon and resolved to use the fine arts as one of its instruments. Rivera and a number of other painters were retained by the government as members of the educational department. They were given a salary large enough to enable them to live in the poorer part of town. Their business was to paint. Under Rivera's leadership they set out to cover the walls of the Ministry of Education with frescoes, going back to a mural technique which had been practically unused since the Renaissance. Out of this novel experiment Rivera developed as a mural painter. Without forgetting what he had learned from European painting, he set out to paint the life of his people, the epic of the revolution, the Indian and the peon. The fame of his murals in Mexico brought him in 1930 a request to do frescoes in the San Francisco Stock Exchange, and some of the preliminary sketches for these are included in the present exhibit at the Art Institute.

Although Rivera is primarily a mural painter, his style and ideas are represented clearly by the drawings and paintings in the Art Institute collection and the special exhibit. A narrative art, which represents the whole sweep of Mexican life as does Rivera's, involves a prodigious acquaintance with the appearance of things. Soldiers, rifles, horses, tractors, machinery, flowers, dogs, trees, Indian dances, women with babies in their arms, market festivals, men asleep and awake, standing, working or sitting—all this material must

be observed and learned, as a musician learns his notes. Rivera is accustomed to make very detailed and careful studies from life, like the pencil *Portrait of a Boy* in the Detroit collection. The next step in assimilating the material is to simplify these literal images into generalized types such as are appropriate to a monumental decorative painting. The pencil study, *Man on Horseback* (Fig. 1), is an example of this stylised drawing, at once very close to life and at the same time simplified by an eye looking for the broad areas of color which the figure would offer in fresco. It is what may be termed painter's drawing, rather than the drawing of a draughtsman who thinks wholly in terms of black-and-white lines.

Rivera's ability to generalize his observations and to create forms which summarize a whole phase of nature is vividly shown by his *Mexican Landscape* (Fig. 2), a charcoal and sanguine drawing dated 1927. It is as if all the memories of a tour through northern Mexico were compressed into one image. Sultry heat, a rocky land dotted with cactus and sombre trees, the low adobe house with evidence of a simple agricul-



FIG. 3



FIG. 4

ture about it, squat Indian figures sitting motionless or bent beneath a heavy load, the ubiquitous blanket and sombrero which are like a uniform that takes away all individuality and turns its wearer to a type: all these are combined into what is, without being at all a literal record, the essence of the Mexican scene.

This ability to express the essential qualities of a thing, whether it be Indian impassiveness or a grand phase of nature, makes his works in fresco or in other media a series of complete experiences for one seeing them. The watercolor *Mesa and Cactus* (Fig. 4), dated 1930, is a remarkable image of the desert—lowering heat, vast space, the silence of mountains standing sharp and blue in the dry air above the plain. In the oil painting, *The Tortilla-maker* (Fig. 3), loaned for this exhibition by Dr. Leo Eloesser of San Francisco, is a reflection of his fresco style. The figures are modeled by a strong outline and very simple shading, which create

an almost sculptural solidity without breaking up the broad areas of color which keep the representation flat upon the wall. The color is rich, deep and soft; the whole design shows a largeness of scale which contributes greatly to Rivera's idea of the dignity in simple human life.

It is interesting to find this narrative and decorative art at a time when most good painting is introspective, detached. His work is full of a strong social sense when most art is abstract. It is architectural fresco when most paintings are easel pictures. His style, distinct from that of any living artist, is an instrument of great sophistication and great simplicity which he uses to express his ideas of the world we live in—with its troubled peoples, full of discontent and longing, its restlessness, swift movement, power, change, its complicated struggles and the simple human realities which underlie it all.

E. P. RICHARDSON.

DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS CALENDAR OF LECTURES AND EXHIBITIONS

EXHIBITIONS

February 10—March 16. Exhibit of Drawings and Paintings by Diego Rivera.
March 1—March 30—Exhibit of Etchings and Lithographs by Edvard Munch.

LECTURES

March 10. "Peter Paul Rubens," by Dr. Walter Heil, Curator of European Art, Detroit Institute of Arts.

SUNDAY AFTERNOONS

March 1. "Famous Animals," by E. P. Richardson, Educational Secretary.
(Lecture postponed from February.)

March 8. "Diego Rivera," by Isabel Weadock, Curator of Prints.

March 15. "Michelangelo in Detroit," by Marion Leland, Museum Instructor.

March 22. "The Modern House," by Josephine Walther, Associate Curator of American Art.

March 29. "Pioneers of a New Art," by E. P. Richardson, Educational Secretary.

GALLERY TALKS

(Every Tuesday afternoon at 4:00 and Friday evening at 7:30)

March 3 and 6. Rugs and tapestries.

March 10 and 13. Sculpture of the past.

March 17 and 20. Textiles.

March 24 and 27. Modern sculpture.

MUSICAL PROGRAMS

(Tuesday evenings at 8:30)

March 3. "Chopin," by Frank Bishop, Curator of Music.

March 17. "César Frank," by Frank Bishop.

(Friday evenings at 8:30)

March 6. Organ recital by Edwin Arthur Kraft of Cleveland.

March 13. Chamber Music sponsored by the Tuesday Musicale.

March 20. Organ recital by Charles Frederick Morse.

March 27. Concert dedicated to the compositions of Franz Schubert, by Dr. Mark Gunzburg.

SATURDAY MORNING PHOTOPLAYS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS every
Saturday morning at 10:00, in the auditorium, FREE.

